

PAIX LITURGIQUE

Letter 67 published 18 December 2015

HOW TO ESTABLISH THE EXTRAORDINARY FORM IN A PARISH PEACEFULLY AND PERMANENTLY

This month we invite you to discover the very interesting and original lecture given by Father Milan Tisma at the end of the first Summorum Pontificum congress last July in Chile.

Fr. Milan Tisma is the chaplain of the Magnificat association, the Chilean branch of Una Voce, and is also the pastor of Saint John of God Parish in Santiago. He has been celebrating the traditional Mass since he was ordained in 1997 at the hands of Cardinal Oviedo, who at the time was the Archbishop of Santiago in Chile. Back in 1991, when he was considering leaving the diocesan seminary because of the persecution he endured on account of his attraction to the traditional liturgy, Fr. Tisma was encouraged to stay in Santiago by Archbishop Oviedo, who had just joined the archdiocese and promised the young man his support and protection. Fr. Tisma made abundant use of both up until his ordination, which would be the last the Archbishop was able to celebrate before passing away. Such is the original background of this sound priest who discovered the traditional Mass while in middle school thanks to a Jesuit Father who was Magnificat's chaplain at the time.

Fr. Tisma spoke to the Summorum Pontificum congress in Santiago on the theme of the celebration of the extraordinary form at the parish level. We here report the principal points he made in his lecture.

Image: rs20151218124725_donmilan1.jpg

Father Milan Tisma, chaplain of the Magnificat association of Santiago in Chile.

I- Recovering the Sense of the Sacred

Long before becoming the pope of the motu proprio Summorum Pontificum, Cardinal Ratzinger steadfastly and lucidly explained how the crisis in the Church depends on the way in which we treat the liturgy. Later on he would often insist on the fact that the loss of the sense of the sacred constitutes a fundamental element of the secularization he so forcefully confronted throughout his pontifical magisterium.

Since one of the most obvious and dramatic consequences of the liturgical reform has been precisely this loss of the sense of the sacred, Father Tisma maintains that the rediscovery of the sense of the sacred must be the first goal of any liturgical renewal in the parish.

Relying on the definition of the sacred as established by German Lutheran theologian Rudolf Otto (1) as *mysterium tremendum et fascinans*, Father Tisma reckons that contemporary man's return to the sacred must go through the encounter with the most perfectly "tremendous" and "fascinating" mystery, namely the irruption of Heaven on Earth in the person of Our Lord Jesus Christ. What indeed is more tremendous and fascinating for us mortals than the Incarnation, Life, Death, and Resurrection of the Son of God?

The Catholic liturgy, traditionally styled "House of God and Gate of Heaven" like the Virgin Mary, has long been the faithful reflection of the great mystery that is the coming of heaven on earth. Unfortunately the modern liturgy has lost the ability to attract—its fascinating character—by turning its back on the *mysterium tremendum*. The suppression of the Mass's sacrificial character in the missal of Paul VI and in its vernacular translations prepares the way for its denial by too many celebrants, whether they literally dance around the altar or merely commemorate the Easter supper. But without sacrifice there is no mystery, whether *tremendum* or *fascinans*.

Furthermore, adds Father Tisma, without mystery the liturgy ceases to be an epiphany of God's glory and perfect holiness.

For him it is clear that the “apostolate of the extraordinary form can and must contribute to the recovery of this sense of mystery.” The traditional Mass, whether it is a low Mass, a sung Mass, or a solemn Mass, has everything it takes to awaken the sense, and therefore the desire, for the sacred among our contemporaries. It’s up to pastors to use them to shock—in the medical sense of the term—their faithful without turning them away.

II- Contributing to liturgical peace

12,000 km from Paris where Paix liturgique began its adventure, there is a parish priest for whom celebration *in utroque usu*, in both forms of the Roman rite, is an unquestionable instrument for liturgical peace. **For Father Tisma, pastors have the duty to work for reconciliation among the faithful, no exceptions, with every liturgical means at their disposal**, starting with regularly offering the extraordinary form in their parishes for those who desire it. What else is there to say?

III- (Re)building a common house

Ever since the liturgical reform, generations of Christians have known only a devastated, deformed, and superficial liturgy. They have therefore lost not only the knowledge and the taste for the sacred but also their common house, what Klaus Gager called the *Heimat*, the “little homeland”, the place you come from; for Catholics, home.

This little homeland was lost because there no longer exist two identical Mass on in the globe since, from one church to the next, from one Sunday to the next, priests celebrate the way they know how, however they can, whichever way they want. The Catholic, thus deprived of his little homeland, becomes a liturgically stateless person, **a believer without a safe place to nourish his faith in peace.**

“We priests” states Fr. Tisma “can and must help rebuild that little homeland to give a home back to our faithful.” This, he believes, is how priests can contribute to the reform of the reform: “We can be the agents of mutual enrichment by making the two forms of the rite live side by side.”

IV- A gradual approach

Beware! Let us not respond to revolution with counter-revolution and produce disorder!

Fr. Tisma has no hesitation in spelling out the first rule of establishing the extraordinary form for good in a parish: gradualism. Strong and hasty methods are a temptation that must be resisted as a whole liturgical education needs to be started from scratch among the faithful. Liturgical changes need to be accompanied by an appropriate catechesis on the liturgy itself, its structure, its calendar, and service at the altar—also on music, vestments, Latin, etc.

Furthermore there aren’t many parishes that could find all that is necessary for the celebration of the traditional liturgy overnight, since it has often been sold off or allowed to fall into disrepair during the after-council.

Another principle Fr. Tisma mentioned was that of continuity. Basing himself on Professor Kwasniewski, he recommends making good use of the new missal’s imprecise rubrics to opt for what seems to be most in keeping with the former tradition whenever possible. This principle completes the rule of gradualism and allows the faithful as well as the altar servers slowly to reclaim “Benedict XVI’s new liturgy.”

V- Concretely and visibly



Fr. Tisma during one of the workshops at the Chilean congress.

Here are the initiatives that Fr. Tisma, basing himself on his own experience, proposed to those pastors who wish to reorient their liturgy to give God the worship that is due Him. The guiding principle is simple: to put Christ back in the center of attention.

The sanctuary must once again be the temple of the Lord, not the stage for the celebrant to strut on. The priest, with help from his sacristan, needs to follow Benedict XVI’s example and start by restoring the crucifix and candles to the altar. Then, if possible, he should push the modern altar back if it is too far forward.

The idea is to have one and the same altar to give the faithful one and the same homeland.

Also, as Klaus Gamber points out, the altar must be clothed again and again. In his own parish, Fr. Tisma has restored the *antependium*. This offers the faithful a visual stability and allows them to grow used to liturgical time through the change in color, when this can be done.

Once the sanctuary has been restored the next step is to celebrate the Mass *versus Deum*, with the appropriate catechesis. Fr. Tisma did as much in Advent, for the new liturgical year.

Next, Fr. Tisma proposes that the high points of the liturgical year should be used to allow the parishioners progressively to discover the extraordinary form, thanks to the traditional liturgy's own gradualism. In his parish Fr. Tisma relied on a 1960 instruction from the Chilean bishops—which therefore applies to the missal of John XXIII—that encourages the so-called “community Mass,” actually a sung low Mass with a layman guiding the assembly's postures and song.

VI- During the celebration

The following recommendations concern the celebration of the ordinary form. Fr. Tisma expressed them especially to respond to congress participant requests. Of course these are not rigid rules; rather they are suggestions that may be adopted individually by each priest depending on the circumstances in his parish and on his own preparation.

First here are his suggestions regarding the public aspects of the celebration:

- recite the creed in Latin;
- omit the sign of peace during the week;
- foster times of silence;
- bring back incense;
- give catechesis on Communion on a regular basis;
- develop Eucharistic Adoration and thus give a catechism on kneeling.

And here are those more specifically concerning the celebrant:

- prepare the gifts in silence;
- join thumb and index after the consecration;
- purify the fingers after Communion with wine and water following the traditional practice;
- give a head bow at the mention of the three Persons of the Most Holy Trinity, the Holy Name of Jesus, of Mary, of the Pope, of the day's Saint.

As for those priests who are further along in bringing the two forms of the Roman rite closer, whether they already celebrate the extraordinary form or merely wish to become more familiar with it, Fr. Tisma proposes the following private devotions: reciting Psalm 42 (of the prayers at the foot of the altar) on the way from the sacristy to the altar; reciting the three communion prayers during the silence that follows the *Agnus Dei*; reciting the last Gospel on the way back from the altar.

Then there is nothing to prevent the priest from wearing the birretta or the maniple if he so wishes.

We'll add that, in response to a foreign priest's question, Fr. Tisma explained that the celebration of the extraordinary form often bore the marks of a strong French influence, for historical reasons (viz.: Écône and the SSPX). But Chile is in the Spanish tradition, and for this reason Fr. Tisma and the Magnificat Association with him seek to defend and promote Spanish customs, for example the mention of the church's titular Saint during the *Confiteor*, the use of the *cucharilla* (scruple spoon) to add water to the wine in the chalice, the *palmatoria* (candlestick the acolyte holds during Communion), or even the wearing of sky-blue vestments for the feasts of the Immaculate.

All the elements that the good Father mentioned, taken together, contribute to present the faithful with the most beautiful and welcoming little homeland whose sole and eternal sovereign is Christ alone.

VII- Who are the faithful?

To conclude this substantial and original intervention, Fr. Tisma wished to sketch a composite portrait of the faithful he's seen join and grow attached to the traditional liturgy for close to twenty years now. The wonderful thing is how truly universal this portrait is.

“First of all there are the veterans who remember their childhood little homeland and are able to recite the Mass by heart. They’re the ones who made it through the years of confusion and still bear the scars, but see the signs of a new liturgical peace with hope. Then there those wounded by the new Mass who suffered the abuses of the postconciliar liturgy and feel bereft of a home. Lastly there are the young who are avid for the sacred and surf the internet looking for what they call “Benedict XVI’s new Mass.” In each of these categories, of course, there are the simply curious, the aficionados, and also the fanatical. But,” he adds with a smile, “no more than in the ordinary form.”

(1) In his book *Das Heilige*, 1917 (aka *The Idea of the Holy*, 1923).